

Serial No.: 09/933,615

Attorney Docket No. 2001015259US

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**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of the claims reflects the current status of the claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system, comprising:

a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and  
a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available;

wherein a router or proxy server determines if a local gatekeeper is unavailable prior to routing a call request to the backup gatekeeper;

~~wherein access to the backup gatekeeper is provided by subscription of users to a VoIP provider to provide backup services separate from a subscription to provider services to users of particular ones of the plurality of local VoIP networks; and~~

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of gatekeepers.

2. (Previously Presented) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

3. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system comprising:

a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and  
a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available;

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wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and

further comprising a proxy server configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not;

~~wherein access to the backup gatekeeper is provided by subscription of users to a VoIP provider to provide backup services separate from a subscription to provider services to users of the individual ones of the plurality of local VoIP networks;~~

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of local gatekeepers.

4. (Currently Amended) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system comprising:

a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and

a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available;

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and

further comprising one or more routers, said one or more routers configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not;

~~wherein access to the backup gatekeeper is provided by subscription of users to a VoIP provider to provide backup services separate from a subscription to provider services to users of the individual ones of the plurality of local VoIP networks;~~

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of gatekeepers.

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5. (Original) A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance with claim 2, wherein said backup gatekeeper is provided by a Network Services Provider.

6. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications gatekeeper, comprising:  
a control unit; and

a plurality of local gatekeeper modules corresponding to local gatekeepers associated with said telecommunications gatekeeper, wherein said control unit is configured to select for operation individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules when corresponding ones of said local gatekeepers are reported by a router or proxy server as being unavailable;

wherein selection of individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules is based on subscription of users to a VoIP provider to provide backup services separate from a subscription to provider services to users of individual ones of a plurality of local VoIP networks;

wherein said control unit is configured to select said plurality of local gatekeeper modules such that the telecommunications gatekeeper provides backup services to a plurality of local gatekeepers.

7. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications system, comprising:  
a plurality of voice over packet networks, each of said voice over packet networks having an associated local gatekeeper; and

a backup gatekeeper having a plurality of local gatekeeper modules corresponding to local gatekeepers and configured to select for operation individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules when corresponding ones of said local gatekeepers are unavailable; and

a proxy server or router configured to determine if a corresponding one of the local gatekeepers is unavailable;

~~wherein access to individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules in the backup gatekeeper is provided by subscription of users to a VoIP provider to provide~~

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~~backup services separate from a subscription to provider services to users of the individual ones of the plurality of voice over packet networks wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of gatekeepers.~~

8. (Previously Presented) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further comprising a proxy server configured to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

9. (Previously Presented) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further comprising a router configured to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

10. (Previously Presented) A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said backup gatekeeper is programmed to provide said local gatekeeper modules for service as a subscription service, said backup gatekeeper being provided at a location of a service provider.

11. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:  
monitoring whether a plurality of local gatekeepers are available; and  
providing backup gatekeeper services from a backup gatekeeper if any of said local gatekeepers ~~[[are]]~~ is determined by an associated router or proxy server to not be available and a user of a not available local gatekeeper is determined to be a subscriber to backup gatekeeper services,

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of local gatekeepers.

12. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising a router determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing gatekeeper signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.

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13. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising a proxy server determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing gatekeeper signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.

14. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:  
providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and  
providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP networks is not available and a user of said one of said local VoIP networks is a subscriber to backup gatekeeper services; and  
providing a proxy server or router configured to determine if a corresponding one of the local gatekeepers is unavailable; wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of local gatekeepers.

15. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 14, wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

16. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:  
providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and  
providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP ~~network~~ networks is not available and a user of said one of said local VoIP ~~network~~ networks is a subscriber to backup gatekeeper services;  
wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and

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~~further comprising~~ a proxy server configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not;

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of gatekeepers.

17. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and  
providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper configured to provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local gatekeeper servicing one of said local VoIP network networks is not available and a user of said one of said local VoIP network networks is a subscriber to backup gatekeeper services;

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and access one of said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable; and

~~further comprising~~ providing one or more routers, said one or more routers configured to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not;

wherein said backup gatekeeper is configured to provide backup gatekeeper services to a plurality of gatekeepers.

18. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 15, wherein said backup gatekeeper is provided by an Internet Service Provider.